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GUYANESE-VENEZUELAN TERRITORIAL DISPUTE:  
PAST AND PRESENT OF ESSEQUIBO REGION



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CARACAS EL NACIONAL in Spanish 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 Mar 81

[Press Analysis by German Carias S: "Amid the Whirlpools of the Essequibo"]

(5 Mar 81, p C-1)

[Text] 1. Jungle. River. Sea. Jungle. And suddenly, down below, islands and towns, houses and people come into view.

Hugging the Atlantic, its enormous land mass almost entirely unredeemed, Guyana seems to be anchored in the ocean, as if clinging to the past.

Georgetown, the capital, is visible to the east, amid sloping woodlands and seas. To the west lies the Essequibo, the mighty Venezuelan river, with its stormy history, that was usurped by British imperialism in the late 19th century.

Here lies the territory that the nation has always claimed, awesome, fascinating, though mired in backwardness and primitiveness.

The government of Queen Victoria seized some 159,000 square kilometers from our country in 1899 after the unjust Paris arbitration finding. Under this international agreement among Great Britain, the United States and Russia, Venezuela was not even allowed direct representation on the commission of jurists.

Today, under another flag and different historical and political circumstances, the Essequibo region remains under occupation, motionless in time.

It is still governed by the clauses of the Port-of-Spain Protocol. President Rafael Caldera's administration signed this diplomatic pact in the firm belief that Venezuela's lawful rights would be observed. All of this was in keeping with the Geneva agreement signed in 1966 under Raul Leoni's administration, when England agreed to reopen the case and acknowledged the dispute in light of the imminent independence of British Guiana.

Down there is the zone we are claiming, from the coast of Punta Playa to the confluence of the Barima and Moraruma rivers near the Amacuro and up to Mount Roraima and the Akari Mountain Range.

The Essequibo knifes through this virgin land and rushes in freely flowing torrents towards the Atlantic.

Jungle. River. Sea. Jungle.

## II. These Are Our Boundary Lines

This entire territory belonged to Venezuela in 1810. After England acquired Holland's possessions in 1814 without boundary lines, the liberator Simon Bolivar decided to set the boundaries of the departments of Gran Colombia by decree in October 1817. He established "the boundaries of foreign possessions" as the southern and eastern borders of the Department of the Lower Orinoco.

In 1845, when Spain signed the Hispano-Venezuelan Treaty with the new nation, its borders were defined as those of the Captaincy General of Venezuela. The eastern frontier extended to the Essequibo River.

Even the National Constitution in effect at the time stipulated this in Article 7 of Section II: "The national territory is that which corresponds to the Captaincy General of Venezuela prior to the political transformation begun in 1810, with the modifications resulting from the treaties validly contracted by the republic."

Nevertheless, long before the outrageous Paris arbitration finding, the ambitious British were readying strategic ploys to take over the lands west of the Essequibo.

In 1834, the British flag with its royal emblems was waving at Punta Playa, near the mouth of the Amacuro Channel and Punta Barima. The British had sunk landmarks and erected barbed wire fences along our coast under the direction of the German geographer and naturalist Robert Schomburgk, whom the queen and the Royal Geographic Society had commissioned to draw up a map of the zone and to demarcate the borders with Venezuela.

This was the origin of the so-called "Schomburgk line." As a prelude to the legal farce in Paris, 4,290 square kilometers of Venezuelan territory west of the Essequibo were marked off as an English possession.

## III. The Legal Farce in Paris

Decimated by the struggle for independence, Venezuela had to agree to a peaceful settlement of the crisis.

Diplomat and jurist Alejo Fortique, Venezuela's plenipotentiary minister in Europe, negotiated with the Foreign Office. Great Britain agreed to leave out the beaches at Punta Playa but managed to assert its illegitimate rights to these territories.

Later, in 1844, as England continued to annex Venezuelan land on its maps, based on the "Schomburgk line," Fortique proposed to the British Government a compromise demarcation ("the Fortique line") that began at the Moroco River, not the Essequibo. Foreign Minister Lord Aberdeen presented the British counter-proposal. The path of the "Aberdeen line" was similar to Fortique's, but the Venezuelan Government rejected it as "unacceptable."

"There is no greater foe of what is good than what is best," our negotiator in London would later write, "and by rejecting it we allow things to be done that we later feel have slipped from our grasp. There is a juncture during negotiations that if allowed to escape does not present itself again."

Later, in 1850, the Venezuelan Government discovered a conspiracy financed with British pounds. Several residents of Ciudad Bolivar had joined a subversive movement that was pushing for Venezuelan Guiana to become part of British Guiana.

In any case, the plot was uncovered and reported by a patriotic group that ironically adopted the nickname of "the thieves' den." England pulled back in light of its alleged connivance with the conspirators but secured Venezuela's pledge to keep the dispute over the territory marked off by Schomburgk in our Essequibo region on ice.

Around 1886, the British monarchy printed new maps with an alarming Schomburgk line that extended 167,830 square kilometers into our territory. Diplomatic relations with London were then broken. Subsequently, between 1887 and 1897, British imperialist expansionism extended its illegal claims on other maps to 203,310 square kilometers.

In the meantime, Venezuela was being ravaged by a civil war between Liberals and Conservatives. It was unable to face off with the monarchy and appealed to U.S. intervention under the Monroe Doctrine.

This was the prelude to the arbitration. The stage had been set for the incredible 1899 arbitration finding. Great Britain stripped Venezuela of 159,500 square kilometers of its land in the Essequibo region.

#### IV. A Sign and a Warning

Today, 81 years after the judicial scheming in Paris and with the 12-year period set by the Protocol of Port-of-Spain in 1970 about to expire, Venezuela still seems to have its back turned on historic realities and its true national interest.

In spite of the urgings and recommendations of our international experts, our democratic governments have done little or nothing to further the nationalist imperative of recovering the territory usurped by the British crown.

This was also the case in the past. Venezuela abandoned its lands in the Essequibo while England settled and won them over.

As far back as 1890, 9 years before the arbitration settlement, our former foreign relations minister, R.F. Seijas, who traveled to Georgetown as the chairman of a Venezuelan commission, alerted the country as to what he had observed.

"As a result of the blameworthy neglect with which Venezuela has looked on at the well thought-out and accomplished dispossession of which it has been the victim (because as I write this report, the country does not have a thorough and accurate idea of what has been usurped, which is now formally consummated), we are running the imminent risk of losing yet more land..."

Much later, in 1945, as the first cries for British Guiana's independence were being heard, writer Enrique Bernardo Nunez voiced another warning in "Three Junctures in the Guyana Border Dispute."

"The outcome of the dispute," EL CRONISTA of Caracas stated, "is a sign and a warning. An unpopulated country cannot be regarded as devoid of private property. The only way to take possession of a territory is to make it produce with one's own sweat. And it is not going too far to say that Venezuela's past and future history has been and will be none other than the history of its colonization."

While Venezuela fails to safeguard its borders and neglects its foreign policy, the new usurper of our Essequibo territory, the independent Cooperative Republic of Guyana, is planning and implementing joint international moves to develop the immense region we are claiming.

In the middle of the jungle, between the rushing rivers, the Guyanese are fortifying the lands snatched from Venezuela by the British monarchy.

Guyana's control extends from Punta Playa to the Akari Range.

Amid the whirlwinds of its history the majestic Essequibo continues its unredeemed course towards the sea, harboring vain hopes.

In an attempt at an objective view of the border dispute between Venezuela and Guyana, our reporter's investigation was planned in accordance with the standards and premises of interpretative journalism.

After analyzing and assessing the problem in talks with international experts, our reporter conducted his field investigations in the Essequibo area and in the region east of the Demerara in Guyana. The investigation lasted a total of 25 days, including the selection and cataloguing of a bibliography with advice from professors at the Latin American Studies Center and the Law Department of Los Andes University in Merida.





The field work covered about 1,200 kilometers, more than half on rivers, highways and roads and in towns on the Essequibo side. Photographs were an essential complement to the testimony gathered in talks with major Guyanese political figures, community leaders, teachers, students, professionals, blue-collar workers and peasant farmers.

In reviewing the basic aspects of Venezuela's claim, we had the cooperation of the Ministry Secretariat of the Presidency of the Republic, the Foreign Relations Ministry, the Defense Ministry, the Interior Ministry, the Venezuelan Embassy in Guyana, the Law Department of Los Andes University (ULA), the Romulo Gallegos Cultural Center in Georgetown, as well as officials and agencies of the Government of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana.

[6 Mar 81, p C-1]

[Text] --The cooperativist government that is experimenting with socialism has been unable to lift the country up from the backwardness and poverty into which it was plunged by a century and a half of British colonialism.

--The opposition, which is also Marxist-Leninist, accuses President Linden Forbes Burnham of electoral fraud and of covering up political crimes, while the nation that occupies Venezuela's claimed territory suffers the hardship of hunger, unemployment and inflation.

V. Silhouettes of the jungle sloping towards the ocean. Georgetown seems to sink into the Atlantic amid its social and political upheaval.

This is a poverty-stricken land, sapped by partisan struggles and racial and religious hatred.

Georgetown is the capital of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, which freed itself from the colonialist yoke in 1966, although it is still hampered by the cultural domination that the British exerted during their century and a half of occupation.

The official language is still English, though greatly altered by the patois that developed in the rural areas as the British expansionism continued. Hindi and Portuguese are also spoken, but very little Spanish.

Georgetown is as small in area as Cumana but more heavily populated. Some 300,000 persons might be living today on the shores of the Demerara beside the ocean currents. Unlike the Manzanara city, however, it has almost no beaches. Its waters are not as blue as the Caribbean. The detritus and sediment of the rivers make them gray and cloudy, permanently mud-stained.

Most of the inhabitants are Indians and Africans, descendants of the immigrants and slaves that were sent to these shores first by Holland and then England. There are also Chinese, Portuguese and North Koreans. You see very few Europeans and Latin Americans.



The aboriginal Indians in these lands prefer to remain on the opposite shores of the Essequibo.

They consist of our Pemones and many Guaraunos and Waraos. Here, however, they are called Amerindians, the discriminatory label used by the English invaders when the Dutch possessions became British Guiana in 1814.

Today there are some 30,000 native Indians throughout Guyana. Hundreds of them are marching into the jungle beyond the Rupununi. Beset by hunger and racist persecution, they are fleeing en masse to Venezuela and Brazil.

#### VI. Political and Economic Chaos

Relegated to the past by colonialism, Guyana is still faced with the hardships of backwardness and poverty.

Despite its apparent economic potential (bauxite production totals 500,000 tons a year; sugar cane growing yields 298,000 tons of sugar; rice harvests hit around 136,000 tons a year), the standard of living is low. The country is today facing one of its toughest economic crises since it achieved independence.

With an annual gross domestic product of 1.1 billion Guyanese dollars (1.944 billion bolivars) and a balance of payments deficit of over 200 million Guyanese dollars (347 million bolivars), the financial squeeze is growing tighter because of the debts involved in the country's nationalization of industry.

In 1977 alone, Guyana had to provide 26 million Guyanese dollars (44.356 million bolivars) in subsidies to pay off another 36 million (61.416 million bolivars) for compensation and services fees to the transnational corporations that still market bauxite, sugar and rice.

More than 4,000 workers were thrown out of work, and unemployment rose to 60,000.

There have been serious setbacks on the political front as well. The people's mistrust of and displeasure with the administration of Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham heightened after the congressional elections last December. A commission of international observers ruled in a document signed by jurists from England, the United States, Canada, Jamaica and Trinidad that the elections were fraudulent. The party in power, the People's National Congress (PNC), had acted fraudulently, engaged in willful misrepresentation and taken advantage of its status.

Furthermore, the opposition, which, like the PNC, is Marxist-Leninist in ideology, accuses Burnham of fostering excessive bureaucracy in government and of covering up political crimes to get rid of his adversaries. Today, Guyana has 1 president, 5 vice presidents, 32 ministers and 4 congressional secretaries. One of the many assassinations that have been committed with impunity so far was that of Walter Rodney, the most charismatic leader of the Workers People's Alliance (WPA), who was slain in June 1980 when a walkie-talkie booby-trapped with a powerful bomb exploded.

In a nutshell, Georgetown symbolizes the political, social and economic deterioration in the Cooperative Republic.

## VII. The Legacy of Colonialism

The route to downtown Georgetown from the small Timehri International Airport (which takes an hour in a 1968 taxi with the steering wheel on the right side) is lined with ramshackle wooden houses on beams and stilts, in the Dutch style.

This is how the Guyanese protect themselves from the constant flooding caused by the rains throughout these lands below sea level.

Within the city limits the wooden structures are like those in any older Dutch city, picturesquely reflected in the open sewage ditches in the middle of streets and avenues that slope down to the sea.

Opposite the cement and stone dike flanking the Atlantic are the sports playgrounds. Cricket, a British game similar to baseball but with pitches grazing the ground, golf club-like swings and innings that can last 3 or even 5 days, is the national pastime.

At the eastern edge of the city is the country's only university, with its 5 departments and 2,200 students. A brand new construction project, its style is similar to that of the cultural center, which the government also built, at the intersection of three new avenues.

To the south, beyond the botanical garden, lies the park of emancipation, which is dominated by the immense stone statue of Cuffy, the African slave who rebelled against the Dutch in 1763 and was killed in Berbice along with 12 other insurgents in Guyana's first clamor for freedom.

In the downtown area, under the burning sun (the average temperature in the shade hovers between 28 and 30 degrees), men and women, many of them jobless, line up at 1100 hours in front of one of the city's five movie houses to see the latest Indian films. There are neither theaters nor television in Guyana, and only one radio station, with two channels, which is owned by the government.

Opposite them, hundreds of Indian and black children jabber away happily, crowding the streets by the entrance to their school.

With free schooling a priority, the pupils wear formal-looking uniforms and two-tone rubber shoes. Modestly dressed blue-collar workers and clerks march next to them amid the horse-drawn carts, harnessed livestock and cars. A great many poor and needy individuals walk by barefoot in tattered clothing.

Georgetown is still a rural capital, mired in staggering distress and need, a sad legacy of colonialist backwardness.

## VIII. Talking About Our Claim

Almost all of the architecture in the downtown area is of wood. Few houses or buildings are made of concrete: a government office here and there, the national bank, a few embassies, two or three hotels. The tallest building is the Hotel Pegasus, which faces the Atlantic; it is seven stories high.

Business activity is carried on at the market just a block and a half from Congress.

The small farmers themselves sell their produce right there in the street. The prices of basic foodstuffs remain more or less stable, under government supervision.

A cut of loin costs 7 Guyanese dollars (12.5 bolivars) a pound (425 grams); boneless dark meat, 6 dollars (10.45 bolivars); a pound of sugar, 25 cents; rice, 2.80 (4.85 bolivars); coffee, 13 dollars (22.5 bolivars); an egg, 25 cents. and a kilogram of powdered milk, 8.78 (15.25 bolivars), but this kind of milk is not available right now in the market.

Like Caracas, Guyana suffers from inflation, shortages, hoarding and speculation.

The most scandalous speculative traffic, however, is the black market for American dollars. In spite of government controls (each traveler has to make a sworn statement about how much foreign currency he is carrying when arriving at and leaving the airport), the foreign exchange business is still marked by an alarming boom.

The black market is kept going by powerful interests that are indirectly manipulated by business and banks themselves, at times in complicity with government officials.

The official exchange rate is 2.5 Guyanese dollars to the U.S. dollar, but the traffickers peg it at up to 3.75. Outside Guyana, its dollar is probably worth 95 cents on the U.S. dollar today. It is a million dollar business for black market financiers to place foreign exchange overseas in international banks.

There are drastic punishments (up to 6 years in prison) for currency trafficking, robbery and fraud. The death penalty, by hanging (the jails are also made of wood), is also applicable to those convicted of high crimes and treason.

Thus, caution and discretion are in order now when the Guyanese talk about Venezuela's territorial claim on the Essequibo and the upcoming expiration of the Port-of-Spain Protocol. They might be charged with subversion and brought to trial.

[7 Mar 81, p C-4]

[Text] IX. Today is a day of rumor and scheming.

The Port-of-Spain Protocol, Venezuela's prime legal vehicle for its claim to lands in the Essequibo region, is up for renewal, and Georgetown has begun the day astir with grumbling and gossip.

"There are reports that Venezuela is going to invade...My cousin in the military told me..."

The "secret" spreads throughout the city on the grapevine from the movable market stalls and is described as a "confidential matter" in government offices.

There are all too many "eavesdroppers" and spies throughout Guyana. They make up the army's and the police's "talking brigades," which opposition groups have complained about time and again in denouncing the repression practiced by the Burnham regime.

However, we were able to openly discuss the border dispute, over and above government restrictions. Venezuelan news teams are regarded with some mistrust. A reporter's schedule and interviews have to be programmed in advance. In addition, the Cooperative Republic's courtesy calls for the attention and company of interpreters.

"Everything is here for you to see," said Information Minister Frank Campbell, the former ambassador to Cuba, as he greeted us politely. "We're at your disposal to show you the good and the bad, the successes and failings of our government. You will find out that other countries have been lying when they have said that Fidel Castro has sent military advisers here. Only teachers and doctors have come. It is also untrue that we have Laotian settlers in the Essequibo region. That was just a proposal that was made to us last year, but we have not accepted it. You'll see for yourselves. You are free to go wherever you wish..."

In spite of the minister's statements, our trips to the interior were planned only to the east of the Demerara. There were always excuses why we could not travel through territory that Venezuela is claiming. We were allowed to interview only government officials and one opposition leader, Cheddi Jagan.

Jagan, who is today the main leader of the People's Progressive Party (PPP), of course reiterated the request he voiced some 7 months ago in Caracas in his remarks to EL NACIONAL: "Venezuelan Government aid is urgently needed to overthrow Burnham."

The rumors and scheming are now spreading through Georgetown amid even more stir.

"The Venezuelans are ready to invade...You have to believe my cousin in the military..."

#### X. The Options of the Protocol

Almost all Guyanese are familiar with the basic premises of Venezuela's claim to the Essequibo region and with the terms of the Geneva Agreement and the operative clauses of the Port-of-Spain Protocol.

"This protocol," Paragraph 3 of Article 5 stipulated on 18 June 1970, "can be terminated at the close of the initial period (12 years) or of any renewal period if at least 6 months prior to the expiration date the Government of Venezuela or the Government of Guyana so notifies the other parties to this protocol in writing."

In other words, the initial term agreed upon by the governments of Venezuela, Guyana and Great Britain expires on 18 June 1982. Therefore, by 18 December of this year, at the latest, Venezuela or Guyana will have to notify the other parties in writing if it wants to specify new guidelines or propose new options regarding the dispute. Otherwise, the protocol will be regarded as renewed for another 12 years, under Paragraph 1 of Article 5.

In the judgment of the Burman administration's most prominent representatives, the protocol ought to be extended for another 12 years, although they are not ruling out new options in the event of Venezuelan counterproposals when their advantages for and impact on both countries are subjected to analysis.

This is at least what Foreign Minister Rashleigh Jackson anticipates in taking a brief look at the situation.

"We have maintained ongoing contacts and exchanges with representatives of the Venezuelan Government with regard to these reciprocal matters of solidarity. The protocol expires next year, and there are several possibilities for action. If one of the two parties is satisfied, it can be renewed for another 12 years. But there are other options. This is what we have to evaluate in a joint, coordinated, common sense effort."

Jackson is a man of few words. But he senses that he ought to speak at greater length in discussing the alleged Lantian settlers in Guyana. He is aware of the protests by Venezuelan politicians in connection with commentaries in the press.

"The proposal was made to us, that is true, and we treated it with concern, mainly for humanitarian reasons. We are members of the Confederation of Non-aligned Countries. We are concerned about the fate of 4 million human beings without money or a future. We can assert, however, that there are no Lantian settlers here. These refugees were never brought in. What certain politicians are saying in Venezuela is clear-cut meddling in our internal affairs."

The foreign minister was in a hurry and had to cut the interview short. That same evening he had to travel to Nairobi for further meetings with other ministers of nonaligned countries.

Guyana is apparently weaving international threads as the expiration date of the Port-of-Spain protocol draws near.



R1: When is Venezuela invading?

An open air debate is going on about differences over the protocol amid the bustle of the market and its bargains and sales, opposite the passenger terminal for the ferry to Leonora and the last stop for the wooden-body buses.

As part of our news team's "official program," the Guyana Broadcasting Corporation has sent with us its star interviewer on "The Man in the Street." This time, however, Cuthbert Monchoir has neither a microphone nor a tape recorder with him. This is just a "dry run" to show us how a mass survey is taken, with people selected at random.

"I don't think that our country should surrender, because that's our land," says the first person to answer, Wandy Trim, a grade school teacher in Buxton, who might have the idea that war is imminent. "Venezuela is a hostile country. It's trying to take what belongs to us. The protocol is of little or no importance. Venezuela is trying to take over the Essequibo region because it knows how much it produces."

Monchoir is pleased with her reply, and so is the Information Ministry guide. He now stops to ask a freelance photographer, Herod Hittielholzer.

"What I think is that we should prevent conflicts between the two countries. Venezuela is only trying to assure itself sources of energy. It's a more developed nation than we are; it's very wealthy. It could help us bring progress to the Essequibo region. I trust that everything is going to be resolved and that an agreement will be reached to prevent confrontations."

As far as Raymond Monkhouse, a postal worker and a descendant of Africans, is concerned, "everyone is sure that the governments of Guyana and Venezuela are trying their best to settle the matter. Renewing the protocol is the most practical thing. Relations between the two countries can never go sour."

In contrast, Deonarius Persaud, an Indian who grows rice on the banks of the Essequibo near Matthews Ridge, feels that Venezuela should be more radical in its claims and assert its rights vis-a-vis Guyana.

"I live and suffer in that area. I cannot be satisfied with the current political and economic situation. Everyone knows that elections were held a short while ago and that they were not all that honest. Moreover, the government hasn't done anything in the area. We're having a great many difficulties. Even the small rice factories have shut down. We would have it better under Venezuela."

The official poll-taker was feeling uncomfortable and adopted his condescending announcer's tone in a bid to elicit rectifications from him. The Indian farmer was not intimidated, however. He has lived all too close to the disenfranchisement in which the Essequibo region is mired.



"You don't know what's happening there," he said in desperation, turning to Monkhouse. "There's hunger, poverty. I don't know what Venezuela is waiting for to occupy the lands that belong to it..."

Visibly disconcerted, the government's opinion-gatherer decided to move on. He said it would be a good idea to pick out some other people at the ferry terminal.

Two Indians were wearily waiting for the boat to Parika. Both of them were rice growers in Bueraserie in Essequibo County.

"Let me tell you that things back there are real bad," the elder of the two farmers said in a confidential tone; the Guyana Broadcasting Corporation announcer was not even asking questions at this point. "We're having a lot of problems with this government. A lot of people have had to head for Venezuela. They're better off there. A person can't live here. Just this morning I went to buy a can of paint near my house. You know what happened. They didn't let me buy one. A policeman told me that I wasn't in line, even though I had been standing there since 0700 hours."

The other Indian, who was almost obese, nodded his head. "The situation in the Essequibo region is unbearable."

"We can't see why Venezuela just doesn't invade. That would put an end to our grief. They say that a lot of countries have helped Guyana out, but the money has been frittered away by the government. Maybe we would have it better under the Venezuelans..."

They declined to identify themselves when the official announcer asked for their names.

Georgetown was fraught with discontent and subversion.

[8 Mar 81, p C-3]

[Text] --Cheddi Jagan, the leader of the PPP, also accuses the head of the Guyanese Government of being a procapitalist dictator.

--He warns the two countries about possible chauvinist movements to hamper the negotiations connected with the Port-of-Spain Protocol.

--"We are Third World nations. Only the imperialists would benefit from a confrontation between Venezuela and Guyana," Rupert Roopnarine cautions.

--The WPA leader also denounces the government for awarding Canada petroleum leases in the Essequibo region.

XII. A political storm is darkening all of Guyana, and in the judgment of international observers, the imminent revival of the border dispute with Venezuela could make the situation worse.

The government is in an economic bind. The production of basic resources is at a standstill. More than 40 percent of the country's workers are without jobs. The national debt is up to 2.5 billion Guyanese dollars (4.34 billion bolivars). The budget deficit totals more than 200 million Guyanese dollars (347.2 million bolivars). The cost of living increases every day, and frustration among the people is mounting.

Meanwhile, Linden Forbes Burnham, a populist leader after the country became independent in 1966, has set himself up as an autocratic president, propped up by an enormous military and police machine.

Ideologically speaking, Burnham is, as PPP leader Cheddi Jagan describes him, a demagog, a nationalist petty bourgeois who has become a dictator wearing a socialist mask.

"And in his bare-faced demagogy," Jagan says, mincing no words in criticizing his former ally in the PPP, "he has taken a whole range of political stands depending on the time period. In 1964, when he came to power with the aid of the CIA (the American intelligence agency gave Burnham \$2 million for his election campaign), he was pro-imperialist and procapitalist. From 1971 to 1973 he played the China card, like Nixon, to attack the Soviet Union. From the imperialist orbit he was utilizing the Mao line. Then suddenly he turned to cooperative socialism. He claims that his ideas are based on Marx, Engels and Lenin. In 1978 he claimed that he was a socialist but a Christian too. And now he has gone back to his vacillating stands of 1971 to 1973. He will without fail go back to imperialism to shore up his dictatorship."

Rupert Roopnarine, the Indian philosopher who heads up the WPA, is convinced that Burnham is an opportunistic narcissist who has set up a dictatorship with a democratic facade based on a sham Congress.

"The Congress was chosen in fraudulent elections," Roopnarine recounts, "and the people know it. That is why Burnham has no grass roots support today. He wields power only by dint of force, bolstered by the rifles and bayonets of military repression."

And all of this political chaos is now being heightened by the revival of the border dispute with Venezuela.

The political storm in Guyana is becoming heavier and more turbulent.

#### XIII. Peace and Friendship

He has been the leader of the Hindus since 1946. An odontologist and labor leader, Cheddi Jagan entered politics in British Guiana along with his American wife, Janet Rosenberg, a former leader of communist youth in Chicago. They founded the Political Affairs Committee (PAC), which they later transformed into the PPP in 1949.

They then sought a ranking African leader, Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham. The PPP became a multiclass party, although from the very beginning they described it as an orthodox Marxist-Leninist group. They shared government responsibilities with the British three times before the party split up. Burnham founded the People's National Congress (PNC).

Today, at age 62, Cheddi Jagan is still at odds with his former party colleague. He is one of the main leaders of the opposition, even though the PPP has lost strength and support among the people. It is still aligned with the Soviet bloc and has three representatives in the Guyanese Congress.

In taking his stand on the Port-of-Spain Protocol, he cautions the two nations directly involved in the dispute.

"Both nations, Venezuela and Guyana, are members of the organization of non-aligned countries. They have similar problems of economic dependency. Therefore, they should reach an amicable agreement based on peace and brotherhood. Otherwise, their judicial and political differences could serve to heighten national and international tensions."

Jagan wanted to make the point that his party had not been consulted in 1970 in connection with the signing of the protocol, which was not even debated in Congress, and that the Burnham administration has not brought the matter before public opinion this time either.

"Even so," he said, raising his hands as if making an appeal, "I think that the border problem is going to be settled peacefully. But we have to keep on the alert, because it would not be unusual for chauvinistic elements to try and hamper the negotiations."

In reviewing the present-day crisis in Guyana, he reaffirmed his partisan conviction: "The Burnham administration has to be toppled by whatever means.

"We have fought for free elections, and they pulled a fast one on us with the votes. Now we are trying to rally the people to try and depose the dictator. At this point we also need the support of Venezuela and all other friendly countries. Guyana has to return to democracy."

Down the hall from the Indian leader's office, PPP youths were printing up the party's latest leaflets attacking Burnham's administration.

#### XIV. Towards a Just and Peaceful Solution

Rupert Roopnarine has the traits of an even-tempered, cautious intellectual politician.

At just 39 years of age, the philosophy professor at Guyana University and a descendant of Indians has responsibilities in the shared leadership of the WPA, the new multiracial party that is also within the mainstream of Marxism-Leninism.

"We are revolutionaries," Roopnarine says quietly, his bare feet resting on the carpet in the livingroom of his home in Georgetown. "We obey no international directives. Our party is nationalist. It advocates a broad democratic front to drive Burnham's dictatorship out of power. We do not, however, believe that a grass roots armed struggle is imminent. We have to get the people ready first. We would never want another El Salvador in Guyana. Nicaragua is a better example for us."

He is worried about the political and economic crisis in his country. He feels that an overblown bureaucracy, administrative corruption and hatred among classes and races have brought ruin to Guyana, but he is not in favor of plunging the nation into a civil war. He prefers to wait.

"Although we have all been victims of government repression and violence, the WPA is aware of its revolutionary role. We are never going to play into the government's hands, as Jagan is doing. That is why we don't take part in elections. We are bolstering our grass roots rank-and-file, strengthening the labor unions and peasant farmers and training students and professionals. Our party is strong today, from the Courantyne to the Essequibo. We have grown (and forgive me for not citing figures, for obvious reasons), in spite of the harsh blow we were dealt with the cowardly assassination of Walter Rodney."

Rodney, who was of African origin, was slain last June in a scheme plotted by government agents. Passing himself off as a friend of the WPA's cause, an intelligence service officer, Gregory Smith, gave Donald Rodney, Walter's brother, a walkie-talkie as a "present." An explosive had been hidden in the small transceiver. Walter was blown to bits in his car, and Donald was gravely wounded.

"The murderer fled to Canada under government protection," Roopnarine recalls sadly. "The incredible thing is that Donald is on trial for the crime. They are accusing him of 'illicit transportation of explosives.' The evidence of government complicity was sent to the U.S. Congress by the American Embassy in Georgetown. It has the evidence of the Burnham administration's involvement in Rodney's slaying."

In the meantime, Roopnarine himself is being investigated by the courts for alleged terrorist activities. He has been forbidden to leave the country. Along with Rodney, he was accused in 1979 of setting fire to the PNC's headquarters.

"Everybody knows, however, that it was members of the government party itself who caused the disaster. The ban on leaving the country has prevented me from going to Venezuela. I would like to get to know the country and find out a bit more about the Port-of-Spain Protocol."

In any case, Roopnarain, along with Eusi Kwayana and Moses Bagban, the other leaders on the WPA's revolving National Committee, has thoroughly analyzed the

impact and repercussions of having the official pact between Venezuela and Guyana brought up again. His position is categorical.

"We are in favor of a just and friendly solution. Venezuela paved the way for understanding among the countries of the Caribbean 3 years ago, and this has been constructive. Furthermore, we know that Venezuela has a very upstanding record in discussing this problem. There is a certain degree of confusion here, however, because the government has kept the country misinformed. Rumors have been spreading lately about possible military action. That can never be resorted to. We are Third World countries. Only the imperialists would benefit from a clash between Venezuela and Guyana."

Nevertheless, he is concerned about the Guyanese Government's decision to grant Canadian consortiums leases to develop oil in the Essequibo region. In his judgment, the Burnham regime's decision is a ticklish one, especially now that the initial term of the protocol is about to expire.

"All of this is very serious and tends to hamper discussion. So, we have to seek a dialog and come up with precise prescriptions for an understanding. At the same time, I would like to find out what viable prescriptions Venezuela has in mind. For example, is it interested in a joint development of the Essequibo region? Is it perhaps proposing realignment of borders to get an outlet to the Atlantic? And above all, what do the Venezuelan people think and how do they feel? We must all defend our sovereignty and integrity. We will reach an honorable settlement along the path of friendship."

Those are Rupert Roopnarine's political and philosophical thoughts.

[9 Mar 81, p C-3]

[Text] XV. The Cubans have arrived. Official ceremonies and receptions are held for Fidel Castro's envoys.

As the front page of the government tabloid GUYANA CHRONICLE highlights, they have come to renew assistance and solidarity agreements. Expectations are mounting in several procapitalist diplomatic missions, however, that something else is going to happen.

Before Foreign Minister Isidoro Malmierca's visit last December, relations between the two countries were apparently at a standstill. Guyana had cancelled the fishing treaty, claiming that the industrial share established by the Guyanese Government did not make up for the total catch by the Cuban mother ship in Atlantic waters.

Nevertheless, after the meeting between Malmierca and Foreign Minister Rashleigh Jackson, the two Foreign Ministries issued a joint declaration. Among other foreign policy statements, Cuba went on record as supporting Guyana vis-a-vis Venezuela's territorial claim, recognizing Guyana's sovereignty over the Essequibo region.



Protests were then forthcoming from a number of politicians in Caracas. The Venezuelan Foreign Ministry reaffirmed the country's position, which is in line with the Port-of-Spain Protocol. Here in Georgetown, Foreign Minister Jackson has just assured us that the Cuban-Guyanese declaration "is an expression of Cuba's solidarity with another nonaligned nation, based precisely on the terms of the Port-of-Spain Protocol."

The Cuban mission, headed up by the minister of industry, Manuel Lega, then signed new technical assistance agreements.

Aid will be furnished to Guyana in the production of sugar and the development of the lumber industry. In addition, "professional advisory services" will be available to the "Guyana National Service" (GNS), the paramilitary body that enlists militiamen in the Essequibo region and by the Demerara, as part of the Burnham administration's plans to develop border farms.

Nothing was learned about Cuba's support for Guyana now that the border dispute with Venezuela is to be brought up again, although it stands to reason that the joint pronouncement just before Christmas still applies.

Guyana thus continues its maneuvering as part of its diplomatic strategy in light of the expiration of the Port-of-Spain Protocol's initial term.

#### XVI. Looking for Oil

When discussions on the Port-of-Spain Protocol resume, the Guyanese Government will tell Venezuela that it urgently needs its aid to develop the Essequibo region.

Guyana wants to resolve the situation along the path of friendship and understanding. In the judgment of international observers, it could not hope for anything more, especially at this time of economic and political crisis.

Meanwhile, in spite of Venezuela's objections, the Burnham regime continues to push its roadway and energy programs in the territory under dispute. With Brazilian aid it is building a highway from Boa Vista to Georgetown. Canadian consortiums are doing oil exploration work around the Rupununi and undertaking hydroelectric projects on the Upper Mazaruni.

"To us," concedes Steve Narine, of Indian descent and one of Guyana's five vice presidents, "Brazilian aid is fundamental. Just as it should be with Venezuela. The highway from Boa Vista will assure Brazil an immediate outlet to the Atlantic. It is 336 miles long, and 220 are yet to be completed. The most ambitious project is the bridge over the Takatu River, near Lethem. We have invested 18 million Guyanese dollars (31 million bolivars) over 2 years and we will finish it in another 2."

Brazil's geopolitical plans also extend to Guyana.



## XVII. 'Nothing Has Been Concealed From Venezuela'

In the assessment of the country's energy minister, Hubert Jack, an economist of African origin, none of these development plans in the Essequibo region clashes with the terms of the Port-of-Spain Protocol. According to him, the economic development of the entire region is a priority matter.

"In undertaking these projects," Jack wished to point out, "Guyana has not violated any of the clauses of the protocol, as some have tried to suggest. The protocol simply contains no reference to an alleged suspension of economic activity in the Essequibo region. If that were the case, we would have had to evict everyone from the region."

With regard to the oil development programs and the construction of the hydroelectric dam on the Upper Mazaruni, he stressed that "we have never concealed them from Venezuela."

"In fact, Venezuela even suggested that we might cooperate on the hydroelectric project. Nevertheless, when we filed the loan request with the World Bank for the feasibility study, the Venezuelan representative was against it. Even so, we trust that Venezuela can and ought to help us out. All of our hydroelectric potential is in the Essequibo region. If we fail to develop it, we will be doomed to continue being a poor country. Venezuela is rich. It should not be having disputes with Guyana. This is the point we are trying to make, now that we have to resolve our border problems in a friendly way."

The Upper Mazaruni project is planned to extend some 200 miles and to generate between 750 and 1,200 megawatts. A station has already been built at Kamaran, with schools and health centers. The main plant will go up 20 miles from the dam.

"If an agreement is reached with Venezuela," Jack says, stressing mutual cooperation, "we will be able to boost output capacity to 3,000 megawatts. Guyana has always been ready to talk, but conclusions of some sort urgently have to be reached. It is we who are suffering because of a shortage of natural energy sources."

Guyana must resolve its energy crisis without delay.

## XVIII. The Agreements With Cuba

The groundwork for Guyana's economic development consists of a broader understanding with Venezuela.

This is acknowledged by Carl Greenidge, a young economist who has done post-graduate studies in London and who is President Burnham's economic adviser.

"It is important for Venezuela to help us on the Mazaruni hydroelectric project. There should be more exchanges between the two countries. We have to establish specific forms of cooperation. If we do not, it will be very hard to achieve wideranging agreements on the Port-of-Spain Protocol."

He terms the lack of oil the "nation's biggest problem." Guyana has been one of the nations hardest hit by the rise in prices. It has had to drastically restrict gasoline sales on weekends. They use diesel fuel and additives with alcohol to run the approximately 30,000 vehicles in the country. Bicycles are almost obligatory, and at the moment there are close to 200,000 of them across Guyana.

"Because of our lack of oil," Greenidge discloses, "we are running large trade deficits. Therefore, we have to focus our attention on developing our hydroelectric potential. Venezuela's aid through a friendly settlement in connection with the Port-of-Spain Protocol is vital."

In the political arena, Kester Alves, a journalist and until a short time ago the editor of the NEW NATION, the official voice of the PNC, spells out the government's position as an adviser to President Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham.

"The claim to a substantial portion of our territory (almost three-fourths of Guyana) is an issue of national interest linked to our economic development. We are anxious to settle the border dispute in a friendly manner so that we can attend to our economy's most urgent problems. When the protocol expires, the best move will be for the highest levels of the two government to discuss possible settlements. I would point out, however, that our response is always going to be dictated by the approach that Venezuela takes."

As far as the domestic situation and the opposition's systematic attacks were concerned, Alves preferred to avoid a head-on controversy. He did, however, describe as "unconstitutional and subversive" Cheddi Jagan's statements to EL NACIONAL.

"Our government is working boldly for the country's well-being. And the people can see that for themselves. The positions of someone like Jagan are unanimously rejected. His remark that Venezuela ought to help overthrow President Burnham is subversive and undemocratic. Above everything else, we have always maintained that Guyana's problems have to be resolved by the Guyanese."

Burnham's advisers do not attach much significance to the joint declaration with Cuba on Guyana's sovereignty over Venezuelan territory, but new pacts have just been established with the Havana regime.

With regard to technical assistance from Cuba and the joint declaration on Venezuela's claim, Alves feels that what Guyana has done with Cuba "is to renew basic principles of international solidarity with Third World countries."

"What happened was that the communique was signed with Cuba and not with another country. That's the reason for all of this stir, which is designed to trigger antagonistic reactions between Guyana and Venezuela. I would prefer to believe that we are two friendly nations that abide by the same standards of international law. Our border disagreements ought to be resolved in a civilized manner. This should be the prevailing approach in discussions with Venezuela when the initial period of the Port-of-Spain Protocol expires."

President Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham's adviser was perhaps outlining how the Guyanese Government will ultimately deal with Venezuela's negotiators.

[10 Mar 81, p C-12]

[Text] --It costs the Guyanese Government 303.8 million bolivars to keep up its military machine, which is bolstered with "volunteer" militiamen and recruits and Chinese and North Korean advisers.

--Their weapons are 7.62 caliber, G-3 rifles, light machine guns, pistols, howitzers, mortars and long-range cannons. Large contingents are concentrated in the territory that Venezuela lays claim to.

--President Burnham likes wicker chairs manufactured in a pilot cooperative, and on leaving Congress, predicts that "the business of the protocol is going to be settled amicably."

XIX. Guyana is an enormous barracks, equipped with mortars, howitzers and cannons.

In the face of political unrest and economic instability, Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham's administration has concentrated troops and weapons in the 214,970 square kilometers of the territory that is under dispute, engaging in repression and terror tactics through authoritarian rule.

The independent Cooperative Republic has a population of 830,000, and 1 of every 17 of them, 50,000 men in all, are under arms. In addition, it has 70,000 reservists and some 10,000 intelligence agents.

In spite of its current budget deficit of 175 million Guyanese dollars (303.8 million bolivars), the government last year spent 105 million Guyanese dollars (182.28 million bolivars) to maintain its military and police machine, and this does not include 70 million Guyanese dollars (121.52 million bolivars) earmarked for "replacement of strategic equipment."

Today, the army (Guyana Defense Force) has 9,000 troops stationed around the country, while there are 8,000 uniformed police agents on active duty in districts and counties.

Furthermore, the Guyana National Service and the People's Militias patrol the country in paramilitary squadrons armed with rifles and machine guns.

But the most feared armed group is the House of Israel, a sort of vigilante group commanded by a narcissist of African descent who calls himself Rabbi Washington, the king of the dispossessed blacks.

Edward Washington is, however, none other than American citizen David Hill, a "scab" and professional agitator from California who is being sought by the FBI for repeated crimes of breaking the peace and for several mass lynchings.

Hill formed his gangs 2 years ago in Georgetown with funds from his followers. Today, his thugs have spread to the southern part of the Demerara and into the Essequibo region. These vigilantes wear black and green uniforms, are proponents of black power and persecute whites and Indians pitilessly and almost with impunity.

The murder of Reverend Bernard Darke, a photographer for THE MIRROR and the CATHOLIC STANDARD, the only opposition papers in Guyana, has so far gone unpunished. The Christian priest was knifed to death in November 1979 during a student demonstration in downtown Georgetown.

The House of Israel is apparently not directly subsidized by the government. However, the police make use of the vigilantes to foment unrest and sabotage political rallies. They are the Burnham administration's most effective shock brigades.

#### XX. Ships, Mortars, Cannons

Allegedly engaged in farming activities, the Guyana National Service trains students, professionals and women at border farms and camps.

This militarized corps has its main training center, housing 2,500 troops, in Papaya, near Matthews Ridge, in the very territory claimed by Venezuela.

Two other centers are being opened up in Tumaturi and Konawaruk, which are also in the Essequibo region, each with 800 trainees. In addition, 1,000 more are being instructed in Kimbia, in the southern region of the Demerara.

These "servants" have another center in Jaguar, where 400 recruits receive training in an area that borders on the lands that Suriname is claiming. One hundred more are being trained at the Itabu quarry, and another 200 at Kurubuku.

Some 30,000 men are receiving training in the People's Militias, whose general command is at Diamond, along the road to the Timehri Airport. They have subordinate brigades stationed near industrial and farming centers. They receive ongoing training to indoctrinate laborers and peasant farmers.

The army mobilizes its forces from a headquarters in Georgetown and from four overseas commands. It is divided into infantry corps and air, sea and logistics branches. The organizational guidelines are still British. Military strategy conforms to the socialist model.

Its weapons are 7.62 caliber. It uses G-3 rifles, light machine guns of the same caliber, pistols and British, Belgian and German submachine guns.

The heavy artillery consists of medium howitzers and 81 and 60 millimeter mortars, as well as long-range (12 to 14 kilometers) artillery guns. They still have many pieces of equipment from the old British arsenal, but North Korea has lately furnished major shipments of arms and ammunition.

The Guyana Defense Force recently acquired two ships, the "MB-Jaimito" and the "MB-Waitipu," adding to its meager fleet of 4 patrol boats and 20 high-speed launches outfitted with land weaponry.

They have also created a paratroopers corps. They do not, however, have fighter planes, just single-engine civilian aircraft adapted to military needs. Combat supplies are tactically distributed near airports and landing strips. The main depot is at Timehri, opposite the international airport, which is the only one in all Guyana with ground lighting.

There are 26 other airfields in the interior, more than half of them in the Essequibo region, from Morajuaana, Santa Cruz and Caridad to Matthews Ridge, Leten and Lumopau.

North Korean officers hired as "agricultural engineers" serve as military advisers. Chinese experts act as consultants. None of the Cubans on the official mission is working with the Armed Forces.

That, at least, is the conclusion of the international observers who have investigated the Guyanese Government's combat capabilities.

#### XXI. With the President's Permission

We are now headed for Belbaag. Our official schedule includes a tour through one of the pilot cooperatives in the government's farm development program.

The farm is 45 kilometers from Georgetown and near President Burnham's country residence. Rice is being grown over 40 hectares.

Farm administrator Edwin Burnet explains that poultry raising and coconut and vegetables crops are also being introduced. They also have handicrafts and woodworking shops and design wicker furniture.

Supervised by agricultural engineers, secondary school students come to Belbaag to learn farming while continuing their schooling.

"There are three other cooperatives like this one in Guyana," Burnet says, pleased with the cooperative's first year progress. "We have 78 students, both girls and boys. Our monthly profits total up to 7,000 dollars (8,700 bolivars). Rice sales have gone as high as 20,000 Guyanese dollars (35,000 bolivars). Volunteers come and help us on weekends.

He suddenly had to interrupt our conversation. There was an unusual stirring at the entrance to the cooperative. President Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham was here in person.

Wearing work clothes, the full-bearded chief executive entered the administrative offices escorted by four bodyguards.



Our photographer, Tom Grillo, tried to take some snapshots. He was very politely prevented from doing so, however, by Compton Bradshaw, the first secretary of the embassy in Caracas, whom the Foreign Ministry had now designated as official interpreter.

"You have to request permission first...That's the protocol."

Burnham sat down on a stool and asked the administrator about the woodworking output. Burnet brought in several wicker chairs and then called in the carpenters, two Indian students. They had even estimated the sales price: 33 dollars each (57.25 bolivars).

"That's a good price," Burnham mumbled with a hint of tiredness. "I congratulate you."

Bradshaw then asked the president's permission for a photograph. Burnham agreed somewhat haughtily, but headed off any questions from this reporter by denouncing Jagan's statements.

"So you're from EL NACIONAL," he exclaimed in a harsh and somewhat strident tone, "the paper that quoted Jagan as saying that I have to be overthrown with Venezuela's help..."

He made no further comments, nor did he allow additional photos. He hurried off with his bodyguards along the path to his country house.

Two days later, however, after his speech at the convening of Congress, we broke protocol.

"How are the Venezuelans," he said with a smile, happy to hear how his supporters were applauding him in the streets. "I hope that you are being treated well."

"We would like to know what you think about the expiration of the Port-of-Spain Protocol. We have asked for an interview, but it is always being put off."

"The protocol business is going to be settled amicably...Don't you worry..."

As I pressed him for more details, he called over the interpreter. The president gave instructions to arrange for an interview through the Ministry of Information. Nevertheless, we did not get to see President Burnham again.

The habitually cordial Bradshaw always looked rather worried.

When we got back to the hotel that day, the first secretary of the embassy in Caracas asked us about the trial of the individuals accused of sabotaging the Cuban plane in Barbados in 1976. He wanted to know whether they would be convicted.



When he found out that the Standing Court Martial had acquitted them for lack of evidence, the young diplomat of African descent suddenly grew sad.

Traveling on the Cuban Airlines Boeing 707, along with 77 other passengers and crew members, was his wife Margaret.

Compton Bradshaw was waiting for her in Havana. Petia, his first and only daughter, born some 2 months before, was now alone too, in Georgetown.

[11 Mar 81, p C-3]

[Text] --Father Edward Harrison, who speaks for the Church in the weekly CATHOLIC STANDARD, asserts that the people can no longer tolerate Burnham's dictatorship and advocates a satisfactory agreement between Venezuela and Guyana regarding the Port-of-Spain Protocol.

--In the view of Jai Narine Singh, one of the forerunners of the struggle for independence and the current president of the Guyanese-Venezuelan Cultural Association, the legal procedures for a compromise could be developed by a joint commission or through international arbitration.

XIII. Hatred among sects, religions and races has devastated Guyana.

The hostility among disparate ethnic groups, fostered by the Dutch and British colonizers, persists and is manipulated by the government itself for political purposes.

The authoritarian Burnham regime takes advantage of the country's many different languages and religions (there are various religions, cults and dogmas among the 434,000 Indians and 255,000 Africans who make up the country's total population of 690,000) to "divide and conquer," the same strategy pursued by the British during their 150-year occupation.

Political persecution and assassinations are planned with total impunity, almost always with government complicity.

The government's indifference to the criminal excesses of the House of Israel's mobs suggests official complicity in Rabbi Washington's lawless acts.

This was the case with the infiltration by the dogmatic "People's Temple" in the Essequibo region when another American, Jim Jones, founded Jonestown, just 100 kilometers from the Guyanese-Venezuelan border and within the disputed zone.

"Jim's broadcasters," hired thugs who terrorized the same evangelical "volunteers" whom Burnham had brought in to colonize the Essequibo region, committed all sorts of outrages against Catholics and Amerindians until the day of the bizarre "final judgment" in November 1979.

### XXIII. What Will Happen Tomorrow?

To deal with this religious and racial discrimination, Edward Morrison, a man of dignified manners, frail, almost emaciated, bravely advocates the most radical positions in Guyana.

White, of British origin and forged in the Georgetown political jungle, this 61-year old Jesuit priest still denounces government injustices.

He is a journalist and editor of the CATHOLIC STANDARD, which is one of only two weekly opposition papers; the other is the Sunday edition of the THE MIRROR.

"THE STANDARD has been around for 77 years," Morrison says, reviewing the paper's history. He is wearing a yellow guayabera, his clergyman's trousers and sports sandals. "It came out once a month. It has been a weekly since 1935, but only when we manage to get paper. We published it up to 1978 at the official printing office of the GUYANA CHRONICLE. Then they suddenly forbade us from printing it there. We had to multigraph it. We recently got set up in a small printshop, but the problems continue. The government is denying us a paper quota and won't authorize imports either."

The restrictions on the circulation of the CATHOLIC STANDARD (15,000 copies per edition) prove, in Father Morrison's way of thinking, that political repression is being practiced in Guyana.

"The simple reason for all this is that the government is no longer popular," the Jesuit priest says, 'ashing out at the present administration. "There are no jobs for the workers; not enough food is being produced; the cost of living is rising, and wages are miserable. The people are desperate. No one dares protest, however. The shock brigades, such as Rabbi Washington's, are homicidal. Remember how they killed Father Darke, our photographer."

Morrison was Reverend Bernard Darke's boss and comrade. He was in Barbados when the crime was committed but returned to Georgetown for the funeral.

"They killed him in a cowardly way." There was indignation and pain in the voice of the CATHOLIC STANDARD's editor. "Darke was taking photographs for us of a demonstration downtown. He was then harassed by several men. One of them followed him to the corner of the school where the demonstrators were gathered and knifed him to death in the back. There can be no doubt about it. The murderer belonged to the House of Israel. An amateur photographer took several snapshots that are a bit blurred, but they still constituted evidence against the shock brigades. The criminal was never punished, however."

Father Morrison now speaks on behalf of the country's Catholics. He speaks for the Church in the STANDARD, the Lord's priest for his faithful.

"Religious hatred has intensified in Guyana. We Catholics are persecuted because we do good and speak the truth. Many of our schools have even been

closed down on account of the government's segregationist policy. The people in government want to control everything. Whoever is not on their side is an enemy. I myself have received several death threats. Burnham is a dictator who resorts to violence and terror. The people can't take it any longer. A lot of things could happen here shortly. The problem is that the United States and Great Britain would rather support Burnham than have a Communist like Jagan in power."

As to the expiration of the initial term of the Port-of-Spain Protocol, the priest journalist thinks that the two countries should try and reach a satisfactory agreement without being under pressure. As far as he is concerned, the dispute is a primarily legal problem that has to be resolved through legal channels.

"We trust that there will be no confrontations and that everything is resolved amicably. We Catholics believe, above all else, that the governments of Venezuela and Guyana must think about the future of our peoples and come up with solutions conducive to the national interests of each country. With peace, understanding and wisdom. The times demand great sacrifices and major decisions as well."

Father Edward Morrison, the spokesman of the Church, was perhaps reflecting on Guyana's future in light of its present.

#### XXIV. En Route to the Gallows

In front of the family altar the Indian attorney with the inquisitive look and gentle gestures invokes protection for his son, a victim of the repression.

Jai Narine Singh, one of the precursors of the struggle for independence and a comrade of Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham and Cheddi Jagan in the leadership of the former Progressive Party, offers prayers and praises to the god Vishnu for having freed Aom, also a lawyer, from the snares of evil.

"It happened 3 weeks ago," Narine says, putting his slippers on again after the ritual. "Four men attacked my son with clubs right here at the entrance to the house. They broke both his legs, but he is feeling better now. That's just one of the risks you run today in Guyana for practicing law in an authoritarian state. Aom and I are defending five peasant farmer members of the WPA who are charged with high treason. The prosecutor is trying to have them hanged, and the government cannot forgive us for defending them."

Jai Narine Singh (which means victory-God-ferocious lion in Sanskrit) was a labor and political leader. Inspired by the awakening of the Venezuelan people when dictator Juan Vicente Gomez died, he led a Hindu rebellion here in Guyana.

In 1952, when he was in Caracas for the third time to take part in an OAS conference, he was arrested by the Perez Jimenez dictatorship and jailed for 49 days in San Cristobal. When he got back to Caracas, he did not have a single cent. Rafael Caldera and Miguel Otero Silva helped him to return to Georgetown.

"The situation in Guyana today is similar to what it was in Venezuela back in 1952," the 72-year old Indian attorney said. "There are too many conflicts and serious problems. Only God knows where we are headed. Many people believe in Jagan, but I think that we would be worse off under him. In the meantime, the people are still in distress. But let's talk instead about my profession and about Venezuela. Politics doesn't interest me..."

He once more took his place on the defense attorney's stand to review the case against Ivan and Olmer Tikaran, Rolando Camearon, Jo Audhan and Jinnah Rahaman, the five farmers, also Indians, who are accused of conspiring against the government.

"They lived west of the Demerara, between Parica and Georgetown, and grew cane. Five months ago the police searched their houses, and they were sent to jail. The government presented six witnesses. Five of them said that they were tortured into perjuring themselves in court. Aom and I are sure we can prove that the defendants are innocent. The government will not be able to hang them."

In spite of his exhausting courtroom responsibilities, Narine Singh has not neglected his ties to Venezuela. At the moment he heads up the Guyanese-Venezuelan Friendship Association, which was founded 3 years ago to strengthen cultural links between the two peoples.

"We have 2,700 active members and we meet periodically. Venezuela has a lot of friends in Guyana. We are concerned today about the Port-of-Spain Protocol. If neither of the two countries brings up the expiration of the initial term by this December, the pact is automatically renewed for another 12 years. Maybe a joint commission could be reactivated, or perhaps the case could be submitted to arbitration. The two governments have to find specific ways to resolve the impasse. Venezuela has to help Guyana more, without asking for anything in return. We are closer than other countries that the Venezuelan Government is helping out economically today. Why doesn't Caracas get closer to Georgetown?"

Jai Narine Singh, former labor leader, attorney and precursor of the struggle for independence, also advocates a legal and political compromise between Guyana and Venezuela.

[12 Mar 81, p C-4]

[Text] --Venezuela has to help us, Guyanese students at the Romulo Gallegos Institute say.

--Students taking the advanced Spanish program at the Venezuelan cultural center in Georgetown call for more technical and financial aid to develop the region under dispute.

--"If Brazil, Cuba, China and who knows how many other countries have lent Guyana support, why doesn't Venezuela too?" one of the female students inquires.

--Ambassador Sadio Caravini predicts that "there will be satisfactory solutions when negotiations on the Port-of-Spain Protocol resume."

XXV. The Essequibo controversy is being debated today at the Romulo Gallegos Institute.

Six students in the advanced Spanish program (three Indians and three Africans) answer legal and political questions about Venezuela's claim.

They all know something about Venezuela's history and geography. They have learned it right there, in the classrooms of the cultural center that our embassy in Georgetown has financed since 1962.

Marceline Sukra, 24; Mohamed Collins, 19; Komal Harriraj, 27; Shelly Moore, 18; Cecile Mackintosh, 48, and Jennice Fraser, 25, are also thoroughly acquainted with Guyanese thinking.

Most of them have toured the disputed region many times, from Morajua to Matthews Ridge. They are familiar with the anguish and needs of the people. They are neither biased nor under pressure.

Along with 300 other students, they are learning the basic facts about Venezuela and at the same time perfecting their Spanish. The Romulo Gallegos Institute was founded pursuant to a proposal by Consul Fernando Aranguren Cabral. It began with 32 students. More than 1,000 have graduated so far.

It is currently run by Luis Tapias, a self-sacrificing Andean teacher who settled here in Guyana 5 years ago.

Tapias is the only Venezuelan teacher in the Spanish Department. The other three instructors are Guyanese. They did teaching assistantships in Caracas at Simon Bolivar University.

"It's been hard to find people in Venezuela willing to come and teach in Georgetown," the Tachira instructor discloses somewhat sadly. "People back there think that Guyana is far away from everything..."

With their notebooks and notes prepared for the day's special class, the students in the advanced program rushed into one of the rooms on the first floor of the institute.

#### XXVI. What the Essequibo Region Is Asking For

"Why hasn't Venezuela annexed the territory under dispute?"

The lively and intelligent Marceline Sukra, who was born on the shores of Pomeron in the disputed region, acts as the moderator of the debate, whose purpose is to enlighten her comrades.

She is fully acquainted with the terms of the Port-of-Spain Protocol and cites them as background information in answering her own question about what Venezuela might do.



"The protocol that expires next year enables the governments of Guyana and Venezuela to explore every possibility of enhancing understanding between them and their peoples in order to settle the dispute. Nothing of the sort has happened, however. The Venezuelans have done little or nothing to develop the Essequibo region.

"Guyana is still completely neglecting the region. I'm from there. I experienced all sorts of disasters as a child. There are no good roads, not even telephones. Many small towns still do not have electricity. All of the improvement projects are undertaken on this side of the Demerara."

Mohamed Collins, from Buxton, near Georgetown, is also concerned about the lack of Venezuelan assistance. He can't conceive of "why you don't bring progress to those lands of yours.

"Venezuela has a lot of oil. We don't. A liter of gasoline costs 5.30 Guyanese dollars (9.2 bolivars) here. We have to buy it from Trinidad at whatever price they charge. If the Venezuelan Government wanted to, it would cooperate with Guyana. It would sell us its oil at a reasonable price, as it does with the Antilles. I think that the best settlement for the protocol is for the two countries to agree that Venezuela should immediately come in and develop the Essequibo region."

Cecile Mackintosh, a day laborer from Georgetown, questioned the students' "eagerness for Venezuela to help us out." He supports the government and its policy.

"We are developing as a country, even if poorly. There are good roads here, and schooling is free of charge. There are problems in the Essequibo region, it is true. But the Cooperative Republic can put things right through socialism."

Shelly Moore had remained silent. The girl from Corentine, south of the Demerara, finally voiced the view that "it's all politics." She feels, nevertheless, that Venezuela and Guyana ought to reach an agreement very soon to develop the Essequibo region.

Komal Harriraj, who was born to the west of the Upper Mazaruni, a strip in the area Venezuela is claiming, shares Shelly's idea. As far as he is concerned, all the protocol's legal facets have only served to delay potential agreements for Venezuelan aid to Guyana.

"That's the fault of certain lawyers and crooked politicians. What our two peoples want is to understand each other and better themselves. Venezuela is our neighbor. It should cooperate with us. All of the people in the Essequibo region have been waiting for this for a long time."

To Jennice Fraser, a native of Georgetown, the best thing that Venezuela could do would be to promote social and cultural cooperation programs throughout Guyana.



"These Spanish courses are a good example, but we need more than that. We need teachers, doctors, technical assistance, financial aid too. If Brazil, Cuba, China and who knows how many other countries have lent Guyana support, why doesn't Venezuela too?"

It was time to close the Venezuelan cultural center, and the debate too.

#### XXVII. Walking the Diplomatic Path

Rather than a diplomat, he has been an attorney, political scientist and professor at Simon Bolívar University. He has also written several essays on Guyana.

Thus, Sadio Garavini (who, despite his very Italian surname, is from the small town of Anzoategui, near Guarico, in Lara State) was already familiar with both the Cooperative Republic and its political history when he took over as ambassador in Georgetown just 5 months ago.

"Guyana is a very peculiar and atypical case of Latin American populism," he says. He talked about it in his political essay "Latin American Populism," published by Nuevo Mundo in 1979. "But its populism speaks English, with a little American" and there is almost nothing Latin about it.

To Garavini, Guyana's political history from the post-World War II period until its independence in 1966 represents a prolog to his conclusions in "Race and International System in Guyana's Political Development," a reprint in the book honoring Manuel Garcia Pelayo (1980). It is a magnificent case study for demonstrating that political and social conflict generally results from a complex interrelationship (systematic or dialectic, depending on one's tastes) among various factors and is not necessarily the consequence of some legendary determining factor.

Today, however, bound by protocol and diplomatic reserve, the young attorney declines to voice judgments on current political events in Guyana and expresses his confidence that "there will be satisfactory solutions when the negotiations on the Port-of-Spain Protocol resume.

"We realize now," the political scientist in him says, "that we have to intensify social and cultural exchanges with Guyana. The work being done at the Romulo Gallegos Cultural Center and in the Guyanese-Venezuelan Association sets the tone for us in paving the way for more effective cooperation."

Guyana wants to secure an oil quota from Venezuela at an affordable price. It also would like Viasa flights to continue on from Trinidad to Georgetown, or perhaps the airline could provide service to Margarita or Maturin. In addition, it has requested large-scale technical or professional assistance. On several occasions it has also brought up a joint development of the Essequibo region.

"We have continued talking about all this broad-mindedly," the ambassador says, summarizing the main aspects of diplomatic efforts, "with an eye towards potential agreements consistent with an objective legal approach and with the provisions of the Port-of-Spain Protocol. Both sides are showing their willingness. As far as an in-depth analysis of the dispute is concerned, that's a matter about which only the president of the republic or the Foreign Ministry can make decisions."

Sadio Garavini, attorney, political scientist and university professor, now personifies the discretion of diplomacy through and through.

[13 Mar 81, p C-4]

[Text] XXVIII. This is the Essequibo. Its reddish waters rushing towards the Atlantic knife through the jungle in the territory that the British invaders usurped from Venezuela.

Untamed and turbulent, it threads through forests and treeless plains, channels and rivulets, over the 159,500 square kilometers that were confiscated from the country in 1899 pursuant to the invalid Paris arbitration finding.

Its sources are to be found in small limpid streams in the Wamuriack Tawa Mountains down by the Brazilian border. Its enormous bed (752 kilometers long) houses 96 islands, including Wakenaam (44 square kilometers), Legua (47 square kilometers) and Hog Island (57 square kilometers).

At its outlet into the Atlantic it measures 22 kilometers 520 meters. It is navigable throughout its length, even at its sources and in the deadend sections of the Mazaruni, which is one of its main tributaries along with the Potaro, Siparuni and Rupunini.

It took its name from Juan Esquivel, an inseparable friend of Diego Colon, who traveled down the river until its convergence with the Cuyuni long after it was discovered.

Guyana was sighted by Christopher Columbus on his third voyage in 1498. Its lands were not explored, however, until 1616, when the Dutch explorer Fort Rijksoverval founded the first settlement on an island in the Essequibo, today known as Fort Island.

From Parica, an abandoned port west of Georgetown, it takes 3 hours in one of the old British ferries to reach the other shore, to Adventure, the promised land. We are headed for Venezuelan territory.

The Essequibo broadens in the regions of the Captaincy General that were wrested from Venezuela through the Paris legal ruse.

## XXIX. Just Curried Rice and Chicken

At dawn, Parica, which lies 83 kilometers from Leonora along the western shore of the Demerara, looks like one big fair with street stalls next to the ferry pier.

Wearing enormous straw hats, the barefoot Indian and African peasant farmers walk around in the open air market hawking their coconuts, articles of clothing, bananas, trinkets, canned foods and vegetables.

And while the trucks and cars are backed up for almost 2 kilometers from the wood plank wharves, the soft drink and food stands are always surrounded by people.

As almost everywhere else in Guyana, the makeshift restaurants near the pier sell only curried rice and chicken. The Guyanese, most of whom are Hindus, do not eat beef. Just as in India, cows are sacred animals here.

Policemen wearing slacks direct pedestrian and vehicle traffic. One of them, a man of African descent and built like a wrestler, scolds a skinny, undernourished Indian child, telling him to pick up the trash that has been tossed in front of the stores.

In spite of its ruins and poverty, Parica is impeccably clean. The Guyanese take great pains to keep their cities spotless. Street-cleaning is a civic duty. A nationwide public cleanup campaign is being pushed at the moment. Common criminals are being pressed into service as street sweepers in Georgetown.

"Here comes the ferry," the tax driver cries with relief after a 5-hour wait on the pier. "Here are your tickets."

The fare to Adventure costs 6 Guyanese dollars each (10.42 bolivars). The fee for the car is double that, 12 dollars.

We are going to cross the river in the "Makouria," the old British boat that the Cooperative Government nationalized in 1970. It has been cutting through Essequibo waters for the last 20 years.

On the other side, upstream, are the lands that were usurped from Venezuela.

## XXX. Frightening the Devils Away

A great many passengers are crossing the Essequibo today. Some lean over the prow railing to catch the breeze coming off the river. Others are sipping soft drinks and beer in the small deck cafe, while the children race around between the benches in the group stateroom, where several women and elderly men are reading or dozing off.

"When are the Venezuelans coming to take over their lands?" Jane Neraum, a Muslim teacher in Better Hope, near Charity, says with a pleasant laugh. She is 32 years old and married to a PNC leader, but her uncle is Venezuelan, from Amacuro. She declines to disclose his name, however.

"It's better that way," she says, putting aside the book she is reading ("The Last Days of Hitler," by Trevor and Roper). "It could cause us problems. Sometimes the Burnham administration doesn't forgive meddling. But we have to admit that things are getting worse every day. There is almost no food or jobs either. As you will see, the Essequibo region is our most neglected section. The schools are a disaster. There are some 30 little schoolhouses, very poorly cared for, along the shores of the Essequibo. More than half of our children have no schools to go to. I hope the Venezuelans get here soon. That's the only way we'll make progress."

By the stern watch area, two army officers (one Indian, the other African) comment softly on the new budget increases for the Guyana National Service.

"We are friends of the Venezuelans," they say, trying to cover themselves up upon seeing our photographer. "We know that the protocol business is going to be settled OK. That's what they told us in the Defense force."

They hurry off, concealing their faces, as soon as the ferry docks at Wakenaam.

While the boat unloads packages and passengers, Indal Denvierdara, a 26-year old Indian office worker at the Somerset Bank in Georgetown, complains about the lack of job opportunities in the Essequibo region. Until a short time ago, he lived with his family in News Road, near Dartmouth, but had to come to the capital.

"Young people like me can't find jobs here. They tell me that it's different in Venezuela. We're hoping that the Venezuelans invade these lands..."

As the "Makouria" heads towards Adventure after leaving Hog Island behind, Sandra Rupersaud, a 20-year old Indian secondary school student from Henrietta, protests the lack of government aid for the Essequibo area.

Her friend Indra Jones, 29, also a Muslim and the manager of an importing company in Georgetown, points out the leading causes of the problem, however.

"The Burnham administration is turning its back on us because all of our lands are still being claimed by Venezuela. There is hunger, despair here in the Essequibo region. But Venezuela has neglected us too. It isn't helping at all. We have to change quickly. We do not, however, want war or violent solutions. Venezuela has the Port-of-Spain Protocol in its hands. Its efforts with international organizations are decisive for us to be able to get ahead throughout the Essequibo region."

The ferry whistles began screeching as we dropped anchor in the port of Adventure.

Over there you can see the road to Underneeming and Suddie with its wooden houses leaning towards the irrigation ditches covered with aquatic plants.

Traditional multicolored flags wave on the eaves of the Hindu dwellings to frighten away demons.

The Essequibo region of Guyana is a land of traditions and legends, a poor and impoverished land amid the congruities of history.

[14 Mar 81, p C-1]

[Text] XXXI. The lands of the Essequibo region smell of mud and molasses. There have been torrential rains during the night. The only road between Adventure and Charity has been blocked by mud and rock and is almost impassable. Many towns and villages are flooded.

Nevertheless, the people have been wading through puddles and mud holes since the early morning (and dawn comes 1 hour earlier here than in Caracas in accordance with standard time in Guyana) to begin work in the fields.

Pickaxes and rakes on their shoulders, the rice polishers and laborers on the cane estates defy the still cloudy skies, while the children, many of them barefoot, have to endure hunger and cold on their several kilometer walk to the small schoolhouses in the jungle.

There are no schoolbuses in Guyana's Essequibo region, nor taxis. Every 4 hours a single wooden frame bus takes passengers to the breakwater for launches on the Pomeron.

"Good morning, senores," says a skinny, awkward-looking, dark-skinned molasses distiller (his mother was Indian, his father African) in rapid-fire Spanish as he enters the Suddie post office. "We're all friends of Venezuela here. They say that you're coming to help us soon, and that makes us happy...We're having a lot of problems..."

Thomas Manglar, born in Henrietta, near Anna Regina 27 years ago, continues talking as the rains once again begin beating down on the wooden houses. He complains about his meager wages and poverty.

"They pay me just 8.50 Guyanese dollars a day, about 15 bolivars I think. At least I'm single. Many of my friends have gone to Venezuela. The wages are pretty good there..."

In spite of their poverty and deprivation, the inhabitants of the Essequibo region are hospitable. Some of them know Spanish, especially the descendants of Waraos and Guaraunos. Estimates are that there are about 8,000 Pemon Indians, who are also known as "Amerindians," throughout this region.

The total population in the zone claimed by Venezuela has fallen off over the last decade. Of the 110,000 inhabitants in 1970, 98,794 remain, a decline of 11,206.



According to the last official census, 51,476 men and 47,318 women live in the Essequibo region at the moment. There are 39,079 Hindus, 25,325 native Indians, 17,967 blacks, 15,957 persons of mixed race and 466 Portuguese.

"They've forgotten us on purpose," Manglar says resentfully. "The Burnham administration doesn't want to do anything for the Essequibo region. It's time that the Venezuelans came in."

The rains grew into a storm over the Suddie hills.

#### XXXII. The Voice of Venezuela in the Jungle

From the banks of the Essequibo in Adventure to the shores of the Pomeron in Charity, part of the area that Venezuela is claiming, towns and villages lay scattered amid the jungle.

Villages like Golden Fleece, Haymouth Manor, Reliance, Bush Lot, Henrietta, Danieltown, Hampton Court, Perth, Dartmouth, Better Success and Better Hope spring up on both sides of the road.

Most of these are small towns, almost all of which are just groups of houses with neither electricity nor telephone service. The inhabitants live off their small family farms and river fishing.

Anna Regina lies between Henrietta and Bush Lot. Nestled in a sort of valley amid the treeless plain, it has its wooden houses lined up next to the cane and rice irrigation ditches.

With a population of about 10,000, most of them Hindus, it is the major industrial center in the Essequibo region. The second largest rice factory in Guyana, run by the government, is located there. The biggest plant is in Mahaicony, some 57 kilometers from Georgetown.

"The capital of the Guyanese zone that Venezuela is claiming could be put up here," 22-year old Lewis Gompout, of Hindu parents and a waiter at the three-story hotel just built at the start of the road to Henrietta, says proudly. "All of us in Anna Regina want to progress. Let's hope it's true what they say about the Venezuelans finally coming in and occupying these lands."

Bernard Young, the 42-year old Hindu who owns the hotel, which includes a modern bar and discotheque, regrets that Venezuela has not developed closer ties with the Essequibo region. They would like to know our country better.

"We get all of the Caracas radio stations here on the local band. Rumbos, Continente and Capital have good programs. From time to time we listen to Radio Maracay and Radio Perija. The ones from Oriente come in very strong. But none of them has programs in English."

Young used to grow rice. Then he decided to build a restaurant and with the profits he had ideas of going big-time with a hotel.

"We've been in business for just 2 months. Things are going more or less well. There have been some tourists, but you're the first Venezuelans I've seen around here. You ought to visit us more regularly. Venezuela is a great country. You could help us. Things are going poorly under the present government. Everyone wants the Venezuelans to come in and develop the Essequibo region."

The rains let up. The dirt streets in Anna Regina looked like an enormous mud puddle.

#### The Calamities of Oil

Isolated at the threshold of the jungle by the shores of the Pomeron, the small Venezuelan town of Charity, which the British gave an English name, has 526 inhabitants, an Anglican chapel, an old Catholic church, a dilapidated clinic and a police station.

Under the drizzle that leaves ripples in the limpid river waters, the boatmen do calisthenics on the wooden-planked pier next to the town's small market.

Peasant women, black and Hindu, as well as crowds of children, surround the stalls. A 100-pound sack of rice is selling for 60 Guyanese dollars this morning (some 105 bolivars), and a sack of sugar weighing 60 pounds costs 20 Guyanese dollars (35 bolivars). A pound of bananas sells for 25 cents (44 centavos), and sweet potatoes for 30 cents (52 centavos).

"Things get more expensive every day," says boatmen Abdul Gaffar, a 36-year old Hindu native of Jack Low who has four children. "Gasoline just went up to 5.40 a liter (9.37 bolivars). The government hasn't done anything here. It has completely neglected the Essequibo region. There are no jobs and there is no money. Everyone knows that the elections were a fraud too. It would be very good for us if the Venezuelans came in and took over the region."

We crossed the Pomeron to the Charity bank on the launch owned by Steve Horton, a 35-year old man of African descent with two children; he is also from Jack Low.

From here it is easy to continue on to Moruca, enter the Guainia River and head for Morajuana, the last town along these shores in the disputed area.

"Morajuana is just 4 hours by boat from Tucupita," Horton says, planning our trip in his head. "From here it will take us 18 hours. I go all the time. The Venezuelans treat us very well. Sometimes there is a lot of red tape. The national guardsmen cause a lot of delays. Here, on the other hand, Venezuelans have no problems, Enzo Cabral, for example. He's an Italian-Venezuelan who has a high-speed launch and always comes over to sell us 'things.' Every 2 weeks he brings us watches, radio-cassette recorders, outboard motors and even motorcycles."

The trade goes both ways, however. "Packages" are sent from Caridad to Amacuro and Tucupita. The Moruca, Guainia and Barima rivers are smugglers' routes. Every week six high-speed launches owned by Tommy Robert, a mestizo from Santa Rosa, head for Tucupita with smuggled gold dust and diamonds.

"My business is legal," 32-year old John Gonzalez, who was born of Venezuelan parents on the shores of the Pomeron and who has two children of his own, hastens to say. "I go on this high-speed boat too, but I bring in only merchandise with invoices. I have a little land at the mouth of the Amacuro. The national guardsmen are my friends. We like all Venezuelans here. The only problem is the language. They don't understand us."

Back on the wooden pier in Charity, Steve Horton reflects on the problems involved in the Port-of-Spain Protocol. He has heard talk of "the agreement" between Guyana and Venezuela.

"But you can't tell what's going to happen now that oil has been discovered in the Mazaruni," the African boatman says, perhaps sensing potential conflicts. "The Canadians are working over there. We need your help. You have to find a good solution for the Port-of-Spain Protocol..."

Peeking above the Pomeron, the sun was rising on the area that Venezuela claims.

From deep in the jungle in the lands snatched from our country by the 1899 arbitration ruling, a single cry rises up amid the longings of an unredeemed people.

Amid the whirlwinds of history the mighty Essequibo rushes in freedom towards the sea.

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